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# The Nightmare Hounds



120 2 5

## Chapter 1 by The Harlequeen

The fire burned low and the embers popped and crackled. The two men huddled over the fire, desperately trying to start it again. The last match flared and went out. A ring of red eyes encircled the camp, as the fire dimmed even more, the eyes came closer. Soon the possessors of the eyes could be seen, great wolf hounds slavering as they crept ever closer. The exhausted men struggle to keep their eyes open as the night deepened.

## Chapter 2 by FINLEY DEPIERRE



The wolves prowled towards the campfire, their red eyes looming ominously over the pair. Then, however, to much surprise, the first wolf stepped forward in to the light, a lean creature of muscle and ebony dark floor. It took a long look at the stone still men, but instead of attacking sat down at the campfire. It gnawed open a bag and ate from within a large bunch of candyfloss that the duo had not brought with them.

It looked at them, muzzle coated with the brightly colored candied string, its red eyes faintly glowing in the dark of night. There was something unreal about this, difficult to place. This wasn't right. This wasn't how wolves were supposed to act, how this was supposed to go.

A person in a suit walked out from the shadows, their fingers. The wolf at the campfire exploded into a bright burst of rainbow, and lightning rained down from the sky. The men at the campfire collapsed.

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The situation glimmered to a halt, leaving behind the room, the two men, and the person in the suit. The unreality engine was not handling well; they needed a way to properly program the situation in a way to react reasonably to fear, not just - random nonsense.

The trials would continue. They weren't ready for the final release... not yet.

### Chapter 3 by



Dr. Maddon Fox anxiously tapped her foot as she waited for their boss to walk into the simulation room.

She had failed.

Again.

She said it would be ready for launch next month but if the program was still misinterpreting like this it wouldn't be ready till early next year.

Which meant another \$2.5 million in funding.

Which meant another fight against her fellow peers to maintain the funding if Mrs. Luteran decided that her and Cassius's project wasn't on improvement or promise worth saving.

This needed to work.

This would save her from everything.

### **buzz buzz buzz**

Mrs. Luteran was late.

She's never late.

Maddon wrapped her arms around her stomach and then ran to the bathroom.

She may be the personification of a nightmare, but she always felt that deep inside she was still that nervous little girl who wanted to let his wing when no one else believed in or saw the

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She splashed some water on her face and wiped her mouth. She felt empty and full of energy at the same time.

As she stared at her reflection she readjusted her hair and coat and felt re-determined to make this work.

She wasn't going to be panicked.

She knew how promising and just how close they were to making the nightmare hounds become synonymous with fear itself.

"Dr. Fox, I'm surprised to find you here."

Right behind her, steel and disappointment warring in her eyes, was the very person who had worked her up so much.

"As am I, Mrs. Luteran."

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